

ENVIRONMENTAL IMPACT STATEMENT *Mercury* Management

The National Environmental Policy Act (NEPA) requires federal agencies to conduct an Environmental Impact Statement (EIS) for major federal actions that could have significant impacts on the environment.

The Mercury Management Environmental Impact Statement

The Defense National Stockpile Center (DNSC) is preparing a Mercury Management Environmental Impact Statement (MM EIS) to identify a range of reasonable alternatives for the long-term management of the DNSC excess mercury inventory and to consider potential impacts of these alternatives. During the MM EIS process, DNSC is committed to involving all stakeholders including appropriate regulatory agencies in the decisionmaking process.

DNSC maintains stockpiles of 65 strategic and critical commodities for use in time of national emergency, including 4,436 metric tons of mercury. The mercury stockpile has been deemed excess to national needs. This excess mercury was offered in open competitions until 1994 when concerns over mercury accumulation in the global environment prompted DNSC to suspend sales.

The Proposed Action

DNSC must select and implement an environmentally safe and cost effective alternative for the long-term management of excess mercury that provides for maximum protection of the public health. These alternatives will include “no action,” and are likely to include long-term consolidated storage, processing, disposal, and sales alternatives. DNSC will evaluate the potential environmental and human health impacts of specific alternatives, together with engineering and socioeconomic considerations.

The MM EIS Process Is Underway

DNSC began the EIS process by publishing a **Notice of Intent (NOI)** in the Federal Register on February 5, 2001 to let the public know that it is considering an action. The NOI describes the proposed action and provides background information on anticipated issues and potential impacts and identifies a preliminary list of alternatives to the proposed actions.

Since the NOI has been published, the **scoping** process has begun. During this scoping period, DNSC welcomes comments from the public on the alternatives, issues, and environmental impacts to be analyzed in the EIS. The scoping period includes public meetings in communities near current and any proposed mercury storage sites and regional meetings if appropriate. The scoping period ends June 30, 2001.

Preparation of the **draft EIS** is the next step in the process. The draft EIS will present, analyze, and compare the potential environmental impacts of the various alternatives for mercury management and provide additional information on the methodologies and assumptions used for the analyses.

FOR MORE INFORMATION:

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DNSC expects the draft EIS to be completed in late 2001 or early 2002. A Notice of Availability will be published and the draft EIS will be made available for public review and comment during a minimum 45-day comment period.

Next, **the final EIS**, which will include any new technical data and studies, will be completed. Responses to all public comments received will also be included in this document.

After the final EIS is published, a minimum 30-day waiting period is required before a decision can be made and recorded in a **Record of Decision (ROD)**. The ROD, notifies the public of DNSC's decision and the reasons for that decision. No action can be taken until the decision has been made public and the ROD is published in the Federal Register. The ROD is part of a decisionmaking process that may also include consideration of other factors such as cost, technical feasibility, agencies' statutory missions, and national objectives.

■ For more information on the MM EIS call the toll-free MM EIS Information Number 1-888-306-6682 or visit the MM EIS Website at www.mercuryeis.com.

